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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of
Kenneth J. Boutte and Ban D. Green

Serial No. 09/900,264

Filing Date: July 26, 2001

Examiner: Popovics, Robert J.

For: Method for handling
and Disposing of Drill Cuttings

Art Unit: 1724

AMENDMENT TO CLAIMS

1. (original) A method of removing drill cuttings from the drilling mud of a drilling mud system of an oil and gas well drilling rig, comprising the steps of:

- a) providing a plurality of collapsible storage bags;
- b) separating drill cuttings from the drilling mud;
- c) then, transporting the drill cuttings so separated to a compactor;
- d) then, compacting the drill cuttings so separated into a plurality of discrete compacted bodies of a substantially uniform size;
- e) then, filling each of said storage bags with said discrete compacted bodies of drill cuttings; and
- f) then, delivering said filled storage bags to a desired end location.

2. (original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein said drilling mud is delivered to a drilling mud storage tank after said step of separating said drill cuttings from the drilling mud is completed.

3. (original) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein each of said storage bags is supported on a bag rack when each of said storage bags is filled with said discrete compacted bodies of drill cuttings.

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4. (original) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein any fluids produced from said step of compacting the so separated drill cuttings is conveyed to said mud storage tank.
5. (original) The method as recited in claim 4, wherein said compactor in said step of transporting said the drill cuttings so separated to a compactor includes an extruder.
6. (original) The method as recited in claim 4, wherein said compactor in said step of transporting said the drill cuttings so separated to a compactor includes a briquetting machine.
7. (original) The method as recited in claim 3, wherein said storage bags are made of PVC.
8. (original) The method as recited in claim 3, wherein said step of filling said storage bags comprises the additional the steps of:
 - a) providing a conveyor for receiving said discrete compacted bodies of drill cuttings from said compactor;
 - b) conveying said discrete compacted bodies of said drill cuttings to said storage bags; and
 - c) allowing said discrete compacted bodies to fall off said conveyor into each of said storage bags and thereby filling each of said storage bags.

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9. (original) The method as recited in claim 5, wherein said extruder crushes and compresses said drill cuttings at a range of pressures between 300 psi to 500 psi.

10. (original) The method as recited in claim 9, wherein said extruder extrudes compacted bodies of said drill cuttings having a diameter in the range of about 3/8 of an inch to about 3/4 of inch.

11 - 21 (withdrawn)

22. (currently amended) A method for handling solids retained in a liquid slurry comprising:

- (a) providing a means for separating solids from the liquid slurry;
- (b) providing a compactor means for crushing and compacting said solids so separated from said liquid slurry into discrete massed bodies;
- (c) transporting said solids so separated from said liquid slurry to said a compactor means;
- (d) crushing and compacting said solids into discrete massed bodies of said separated solids;
- (e) providing at least one storage bag for storing said discrete massed bodies of said separated solids;
- (f) conveying said discrete massed bodies of said separated solids from said compactor means to said storage bag;
- (g) filling said storage bag with said discrete massed bodies of said separated solids; and
- (h) transporting said filled storage bag to a desired end location.

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23. (original) The method as recited in claim 8, further comprising the step of adding a bonding agent to said compactor along with the drill cuttings so separated to said compactor so as to facilitate compacting the drill cuttings so separated into a plurality of discrete compacted bodies of a substantially uniform size.

24. (original) The method as recited in claim 22, further comprising the step of adding a bonding agent to said compactor along with said solids so separated from said liquid slurry to said compactor means so as to facilitate crushing and compacting said solids into discrete massed bodies of said separated solids.

25. (original) A method of disposing drill cuttings produced from the drilling mud of a drilling mud system of an oil and gas well drilling rig, comprising the steps of:

- providing a plurality of collapsible storage bags;
- separating drill cuttings from the drilling mud;
- filling each of said storage bags with said drill cuttings so separated; and
- then, delivering each of said storage bags so filled to a desired end location.

26. (original) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein each of said storage bags is supported on a bag rack when each of said storage bags is filled with said drill cuttings so separated.

27. (original) The method as recited in claim 26, wherein said drilling mud is delivered to a drilling mud storage tank after said step of separating said drill cuttings from the drilling mud is completed.

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28. (previously amended) The method as recited in claim 26, further comprising the additional step of compacting said drill cuttings so separated into a plurality of discrete compacted bodies of a substantially uniform size prior to the step of filling each of said storage bags with said drill cuttings so separated.

29. (original) The method as recited in claim 28, wherein the step of compacting said drill cuttings so separated includes extruding said drill cuttings so separated with an extruder.

30. (original) The method as recited in claim 28 wherein the step of compacting said drill cuttings so separated includes compressing said drill cuttings so separated into briquettes by means of a briquetting machine.

31. (original) The method as recited in claim 28 wherein each of said plurality of storage bags is reusable.

32. (previously added) The method as recited in claim 10 wherein said extruder is an auger extruder.

33. (previously added) The method as recited in claim 10, wherein said extruder is a ram extruder.

34. (previously added) The method as recited in claim 29 wherein said extruder is an auger extruder.

35. (previously added) The method as recited in claim 29, wherein said extruder is a ram extruder.